

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
NEWNAN DIVISION

YVONNE BROWN,

Plaintiff,

v.

CHRISTA OWEN,

Defendant.

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CIVIL ACTION

FILE No. _____

COMPLAINT

COMES NOW, YVONNE BROWN, by and through the undersigned counsel, and files this, her Complaint against Defendant CHRISTA OWEN pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.* (“ADA”) and the ADA’s Accessibility Guidelines, 28 C.F.R. Part 36 (“ADAAG”). In support thereof, Plaintiff respectfully shows this Court as follows:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This Court has original jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for Plaintiff’s claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*, based upon Defendant’s failure to remove physical barriers to access and violations of Title III of the ADA.

2. Venue is proper in the federal District Court for the Northern District

of Georgia, Newnan Division, as the parcel of real property at issue in this case is located in Carroll County, Georgia, and Defendant is a resident of Haralson County, Georgia.

PARTIES

3. Plaintiff YVONNE BROWN (hereinafter “Plaintiff”) is, and has been at all times relevant to the instant matter, a natural person residing in Douglasville, Georgia (Douglas County).

4. Plaintiff suffers from Epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis (“MS”) and has suffered multiple injuries resulting in irreversible damage to her legs, and is disabled as defined by the ADA.

5. Plaintiff is required to traverse in a wheelchair and is substantially limited in performing one or more major life activities, including but not limited to: walking, standing, grabbing, grasping and/or pinching.

6. Plaintiff uses a wheelchair for mobility purposes.

7. Defendant CHRISTA OWEN (hereinafter “Defendant”) is an individual whom, upon information and good faith belief, has been a resident of the State of Georgia at all times relevant hereto.

8. Defendant may be properly served with process at 1735 Cashtown Road, Bremen, Georgia 30110.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

9. On or about July 18, 2021, Plaintiff was a customer at “Dollar General,” a business located at 3960 Carrollton Villa Rica Highway, Carrollton, Georgia 30116.

10. Defendant is the owner (or co-owner) of the real property and improvements that are the subject of this action. (The contiguous structures and improvements situated upon said real property shall be referenced herein as the “Facility,” and said real property shall be referenced herein as the “Property”).

11. Plaintiff lives approximately eighteen (18) miles from the Facility and Property.

12. Plaintiff regularly travels in the near vicinity of the Facility and Property.

13. Plaintiff’s access to the business(es) located at 3958 Carrollton Villa Rica Hwy, Carrollton, Georgia 30116 (of which 3960 Carrollton Villa Rica Hwy, Carrollton, Georgia 30116 is a part; also referenced as Carroll County Property Appraiser’s parcel number 153 0364), and/or full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, foods, drinks, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein were denied and/or limited because of her disabilities, and she will be denied and/or limited in the future unless and until

Defendant is compelled to remove the physical barriers to access and correct the ADA violations that exist at the Facility and Property, including those set forth in this Complaint.

14. Plaintiff has visited the Facility and Property at least once before and intends on revisiting the Facility and Property once the Facility and Property are made accessible.

15. Plaintiff intends to revisit the Facility and Property to purchase goods and/or services.

16. Plaintiff travelled to the Facility and Property as a customer and as an advocate for the disabled, encountered the barriers to her access of the Facility and Property that are detailed in this Complaint, engaged those barriers, suffered legal harm and legal injury, and will continue to suffer such harm and injury as a result of the illegal barriers to access present at the Facility and Property.

COUNT I
VIOLATIONS OF THE ADA AND ADAAG

17. On July 26, 1990, Congress enacted the Americans with Disabilities Act 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.* (the “ADA”).

18. The ADA provided places of public accommodation one and a half years from its enactment to implement its requirements.

19. The effective date of Title III of the ADA was January 26, 1992 (or

January 26, 1993 (if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

20. The Facility is a public accommodation and service establishment.

21. The Property is a public accommodation and service establishment.

22. Pursuant to the mandates of 42 U.S.C. § 12134(a), on July 26, 1991, the Department of Justice and Office of Attorney General promulgated federal regulations to implement the requirements of the ADA. 28 C.F.R. Part 36.

23. Public accommodations were required to conform to these regulations by January 26, 1992 (or by January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

24. Liability for violations under Title III or the ADA falls on “any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation.” 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a).

25. The Facility must be, but is not, in compliance with the ADA and ADAAG.

26. The Property must be, but is not, in compliance with the ADA and ADAAG.

27. Plaintiff has attempted to, and has to the extent possible, accessed the

Facility and the Property in her capacity as a customer of the Facility and Property, and as an advocate for the disabled, but could not fully do so because of her disabilities resulting from the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Facility and Property that preclude and/or limit her access to the Facility and Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

28. Plaintiff intends to visit the Facility and Property again in the future as a customer and as an advocate for the disabled in order to utilize all of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations commonly offered at the Facility and Property, but will be unable to fully do so because of her disability and the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Facility and Property that preclude and/or limit her access to the Facility and Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

29. Defendant has discriminated against Plaintiff (and others with disabilities) by denying her access to, and full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations of the Facility

and Property, as prohibited by, and by failing to remove architectural barriers as required by, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

30. Defendant will continue to discriminate against Plaintiff and others with disabilities unless and until Defendant is compelled to remove all physical barriers that exist at the Facility and Property, including those specifically set forth herein, and make the Facility and Property accessible to and usable by Plaintiff and other persons with disabilities.

31. A specific list of unlawful physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations which Plaintiff experienced and/or observed that precluded and/or limited Plaintiff's access to the Facility and Property and the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of the Facility and Property include, but are not limited to:

(a) EXTERIOR ELEMENTS:

- (i) There are two sets of two disabled accessible parking spaces on the Property (i.e. a total of four disabled accessible parking spaces), and each set has an access aisle centrally adjacent to those accessible parking spaces. These two access aisles are not level due to the presence of a ramp within the boundaries of each such access aisle, in violation of section 502.4 of the 2010

ADAAG standards.

- (ii) Due to an apparent policy of placing an unaffixed rubber mats on the ground surfaces of the accessible ramp on the Property most proximate to the entrance of the Dollar General portion of the Facility, said ground surfaces have vertical rises in excess of $\frac{1}{4}$ " (one quarter inch) in height and are not stable, in violation 405.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (iii) The walking surfaces of multiple portions of the accessible route on the Property have a slope in excess of 1:20 (one to twenty), in violation of section 403.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (iv) The exterior of the Property does not provide for a minimum of 5% (five percent) of the dining surfaces utilized for consumption of food or drink that comply with section 902.2 of the 2010 ADAAG standards, requiring appropriate knee and toe clearance thereunder as set forth in section 306 of the 2010 ADAAG standards, positioned for a forward approach, in violation of section 226.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.

(b) INTERIOR ELEMENTS:

- (i) Insert Summary of Restroom Violations;
- (ii) The interior of the Subway portion of the Facility lacks restrooms signage that complies with sections 216.8 and 703 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (iii) The soap dispensers in the restrooms in the Subway portion of the Facility are located outside the prescribed vertical reach ranges set forth in section 308.2.1 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (iv) The hardware on the restroom doors in the Subway portion of the Facility have operable parts that require tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist, in violation of section 309.4 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (v) The hand operated flush controls on the commodes in the accessible toilet stalls in the restrooms in the Subway portion of the Facility are not located on the open side of the accessible stalls, in violation of section 604.6 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (vi) The door to the restrooms in the Dollar General portion of the Facility requires an opening force in excess of 5 lbs. (five

pounds), in violation of section 404.2.9 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.

- (vii) The hand operated flush controls on the commodes in the accessible toilet stalls in the restrooms in the Dollar General portion of the Facility are not located on the open side of the accessible stalls, in violation of section 604.6 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (viii) The toilet paper dispensers in the restrooms in the Dollar General portion of the Facility are positioned outside the permissible reach ranges set forth in section 604.7 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (ix) The Marco's portion of the Facility lacks restrooms signage that complies with sections 216.8 and 703 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.
- (x) The mirrors in the restrooms in the Marco's portion of the Facility exceed the maximum permissible height set forth in section 603.3 of the 2010 ADAAG standards.

32. Upon information and good faith belief, Defendant fails to adhere to a policy, practice and procedure to ensure that all facilities on the Property are

readily accessible to and usable by disabled individuals.

33. Without limitation, the above-described violations of the ADAAG made it more difficult for Plaintiff to exit and re-enter her vehicle while on the Property, and more difficult and dangerous for Plaintiff to utilize the ramps servicing the Property.

34. The violations enumerated above may not be a complete list of the barriers, conditions or violations encountered by Plaintiff and/or which exist at the Facility and Property.

35. Plaintiff requires an inspection of Facility and Property in order to determine all of the discriminatory conditions present at the Facility and Property in violation of the ADA.

36. The removal of the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations alleged herein is readily achievable and can be accomplished and carried out without significant difficulty or expense. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv); 42 U.S.C. § 12181(9); 28 C.F.R. § 36.304.

37. All of the violations alleged herein are readily achievable to modify to bring the Facility and Property into compliance with the ADA.

38. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Facility and Property is readily

achievable because the nature and cost of the modifications are relatively low.

39. Upon information and good faith belief, the removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Facility and Property is readily achievable because Defendant has the financial resources to make the necessary modifications.

40. In instances where the 2010 ADAAG standards do not apply, the 1991 ADAAG standards apply, and all of the alleged violations set forth herein can be modified to comply with the 1991 ADAAG standards.

41. Plaintiff is without adequate remedy at law, is suffering irreparable harm, and reasonably anticipates that she will continue to suffer irreparable harm unless and until Defendant is required to remove the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Facility and Property, including those alleged herein.

42. Plaintiff's requested relief serves the public interest.

43. The benefit to Plaintiff and the public of the relief outweighs any resulting detriment to Defendant.

44. Plaintiff's counsel is entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees and costs of litigation from Defendant pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 12188 and 12205.

45. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188(a), this Court is provided authority to

grant injunctive relief to Plaintiff, including the issuance of an Order directing Defendant to modify the Facility and Property to the extent required by the ADA.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays as follows:

- (a) That the Court find Defendant in violation of the ADA and ADAAG;
- (b) That the Court issue a permanent injunction enjoining Defendant from continuing its discriminatory practices;
- (c) That the Court issue an Order requiring Defendant to (i) remove the physical barriers to access and (ii) alter the subject Facility and Property to make them readily accessible to, and useable by, individuals with disabilities to the extent required by the ADA;
- (d) That the Court award Plaintiff's counsel reasonable attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and costs; and
- (e) That the Court grant such further relief as deemed just and equitable in light of the circumstances.

Dated: October 12, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Craig J. Ehrlich

Craig J. Ehrlich

Georgia Bar No. 242240

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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL RULE 5.1

The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing document has been prepared in accordance with the font type and margin requirements of Local Rule 5.1 of the Northern District of Georgia, using a font type of Times New Roman and a point size of 14.

/s/Craig J. Ehrlich
Craig J. Ehrlich